

## Overview

Outreach and engagement are a key factor for a successful waste program. Companies, governments, schools, and other organizations utilize outreach and engagement measures to educate employees, guests, residents, and other building visitors as to the best practices for waste diversion and reduction at the property.

Through the Better Buildings Waste Reduction Pilot, Commercial partners participated in an outreach and engagement working group to share challenges and discuss solutions. This fact sheet summarizes some of the key best practices related to outreach and engagement in the Commercial building sector. While this document references select partner solutions, you can view a complete list [here](#).

## Signage

Proper signage across your property helps prevent waste bin contamination and engages your occupants.

### ► Cover your bases

Signage should be plentiful and consistent across the property. Consider your audience (employees, custodial staff, visitors, etc.) and place signage at bins in break rooms, hallways, workspaces, cafes, “back of house” prep, loading docks, and on outside dumpsters. Consider putting signage on any drawer or cabinet that houses disposables with instructions.

### ► Keep it specific

The best signage typically features a mix of images and few words and uses pictures of the exact items commonly found in that space (i.e. the exact brand and model of compostable coffee cup). Your waste hauler may also have pre-made signage specific to the items they do and don't accept in their waste stream. A list of core items that are recycled or composted will help those who often feel confused.

### ► Consider aesthetics

Clean and professional-looking signage will help ensure it isn't inadvertently removed from public-facing spaces and will help get stakeholders on board with adding more signage to the building. Always get approval when applying signage to externally facing spaces. Try user testing to determine what pictures, colors, designs, etc. work best, and use the most common language(s) for the area.

## Waste Audits

You can't manage what you don't measure. Waste audits give insight into what is getting tossed in the waste bins, if it is going to the right place, and the level of contamination in your waste streams.

### ► Get granular

Collect as much data as possible, showing not only how much you have in each bin but *what* is in each bin. Did recyclables end up in the landfill bin, or compostables in the recycling? Note the types of materials in each stream (paper, coffee cups, plastic film, food, etc.). Track and share these insights to make improvements.



## Waste Outreach Example Resources

### ► [Shorenstein Properties: Improved Waste Diversion with Training and Audits](#)

Shorenstein utilized three main components—policy, training and outreach, and auditing—to achieve success in their waste diversion program.

### ► [Sprint's Systematic Approach to Waste Management](#)

Sprint's approach to waste management includes five main elements and has resulted in an increasing waste diversion rate each year since 2008.

▶ **Address the “why”**

Provide information on the importance of preventing bin contamination. Clean waste streams are important for supporting the recycling markets, creating jobs, and ensuring items get recycled or composted as intended.

## Web-Based Trainings

Web-based waste trainings or quizzes are tangible ways to reach employees, residents, students, and other stakeholders. Because they are virtual, they are accessible regardless of location. Here are some best practices on setting up web-based waste trainings:

▶ **Use images**

Pictures in the training make it more visually interesting and more effective for the participants. Utilize pictures of items commonly contaminating your waste streams, or of the exact items commonly seen at your facility. See Lawrence Berkeley National Lab’s picture-oriented online guide [here](#).

▶ **Integrate with other trainings**

With the help of the Human Resources department, integrate the training into annual or new hire training packets. For large campus settings, release the training as part of an online education campaign with prizes for participation.

▶ **Reach out to your waste hauler**

The business of what-goes-where when it comes to waste is highly localized, so reach out to your waste hauler to see if they have existing training videos, images, or materials for you to leverage.

## Events and Communications

In-person events can provide an opportunity for hands-on education. Here are some best practices for events and communications:

▶ **Leverage your vendors**

Talk to your waste vendors about how they can support your efforts. Some may offer to do a lunch-n-learn or training session for stakeholders on your behalf. Go over items commonly placed in the wrong bins and ask participants to bring a waste item that often confuses them.

▶ **See where your trash goes first-hand**

Reach out to your waste vendors to see if they offer tours of their landfills, recycling plants, materials recovery facilities, or composting facilities. Seeing where waste goes and understanding how the process works will help employees and other stakeholders feel ownership over their waste and encourage proper waste sorting to prevent contamination.

▶ **Look internally and use some friendly competition**

Look for opportunities to speak at monthly team or department meetings. Check with managers or department executives to find the best options. Develop a dashboard or monthly bulletin in which buildings can see how they are performing against one another and create an “Environmental Champion Program” to feature exemplary employees.

## Green Teams and Working Groups

If your organization does not have a dedicated sustainability department, green teams and working groups can be an excellent way to involve waste and sustainability in employees’ everyday work.

▶ **Engage multiple departments**

If your organization is large, try multiple green teams or working groups based in different areas of the company. You’ll be able to tackle larger issues from multiple angles while involving many key stakeholders.